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UNCLAS LILONGWE 001016

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EB/IFD/ODF MARLENE BREEN
STATE FOR EB/IFD/OMA FRANCES CHISHOLM
TREASURY FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/AFRICA LUKAS KOHLER

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TAGS: [KCOR](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [PINR](#) [MI](#)

SUBJECT: MALAWI'S FORMER FINANCE MINISTER ARRESTED FOR
CORRUPTION

REF: LILONGWE 839

[1](#)1. (U) Former Minister of Finance Friday Jumbe was arrested on October 27 as he attempted to leave Malawi for South Africa. Though the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Anti-Corruption Bureau, and Jumbe's lawyer have not publicly said what charges Jumbe faces, his arrest is widely thought to be related to the 2002 maize scandal (reftel). The ACB has also reportedly ordered Jumbe to hand over an inventory of his assets within seven days. According to unconfirmed reports, Jumbe was picked up at Blantyre's Chileka Airport as he tried to board a flight for South Africa, ostensibly to buy parts to repair his Mercedes.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Since the release two months ago of an independent commission's report on the maize scandal, the public has demanded prosecution of those responsible. The maize scandal is the perhaps the most sensitive of several pending corruption cases, both because it entailed profit-taking from a starvation-relief program, and because the commission's report implicated several very high-ranking GOM officials.

[1](#)2. (SBU) COMMENT. Jumbe is a stalwart Muluzi loyalist and erstwhile senior official in the nominally ruling United Democratic Front (UDF). His arrest follows a clear split between President Bingu wa Mutharika and former President Bakili Muluzi's loyalists within the UDF; it is the second arrest of a Muluzi minister on corruption or financial crimes charges since Mutharika took office in May. Several senior UDF officials have also been arrested on corruption charges.
GILMOUR